

# RUSSIA

## Party Portrait

Russia's engagement in the Middle East has deep historic roots. For more than two hundred years the primary goal of Russia's foreign policy was to drive the Ottoman Empire out from the Balkans and Black Sea region. Persia was divided into the Russian and British zones of influence. Russia's entry into the World War One was mainly motivated by its claims for Constantinople and the Turkish Straits of Bosphorus and Dardanelles. The USSR continued active involvement in the political developments of the Middle East, soon leading to tense contention with the United States. Today, Moscow's official position is the continued premise of Russia's exclusively important role in regulating the Middle Eastern conflicts. Moscow is engaged in a variety of interaction around the Arab-Israeli conflict. As a permanent UN Security Council and Middle East Quartet member, Russia is insisting on the inclusive and collegial nature of its policy in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Moscow supported Assad in the wake of the Arab Spring, but the formal rationale behind Russia's military presence in Syria is fighting terrorists. In December 2016, Russia announced that the peace agreement in Syria had been reached through the help of the Russia-Turkey-Iran trio of mediators.

## Key Interests

- Restrain/block Islamic extremism as a matter of national security
- Stop revolutionary changes of regimes (primarily those where Moscow sees the influence of outside powers)
- Secure limited military presence in ME
- Expand presence in the local markets of weaponry, nuclear energy, oil and gas, food, etc.
- Obtain a degree of control over world oil prices
- Attract foreign investments in Russia
- Restore international reputation

## Sources of Leverage

**Political** - Consolidated political elite and centralized power; deep penetration of the Russian state and private companies in the economies of the Middle East;  
**Soft Power** - Public and cultural diplomacy; reputation (especially after the success of the Syrian peace process initiation)  
**Military** - Hard power (military and intelligence)  
**Convening Power** - UNSC permanent membership  
**Energy** - Oil and gas

## Regional Strategy

Russia is involved in fighting terrorists through a variety of levers - from space intelligence through cultural diplomacy, - to prevent the infiltration of extremism in Russia and neighboring CIS republics. Supports secular regimes, particularly Assad's government. Holds open and secret negotiations of bilateral and multilateral format, leaving room for potential negotiation.

## Powerful Individuals

Vladimir Putin (President), Sergey Lavrov (Minister of Foreign Affairs), Sergey Shoigu (Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation since 2012), Mikhail Bogdanov (Special Representative of the President for the Middle East and Africa), Valery Gerasimov (Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces and Deputy Defense Minister), Igor Konashenkov (Head of Department of Information of the Ministry of Defense), and Anatoliy Antonov (the Deputy Foreign Minister supervising the questions of politic-military realm and nuclear weapons).

## Potential Negotiation Moves

**Mediation** - Engage more parties into the initially trilateral mediation alliance for the Syrian peace process (like Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iraq, and Jordan)  
**US - Russia Relations** - Test the waters with Trump administration to potentially 'reset' the relations with the U.S.  
**Syria** - Advocate for an internal separation of Syria with an eventual formation of a federative form of government with the precedence of Alawites

## Internal Conflicts

Islamic extremists operating in the territory of Russia (mainly North Caucasus and Volga region).

## Memberships

CIS, IAEA, OIC (Observer), OSCE, Quartet on the Middle East, UN (Security Council)

## Allies

SYRIA Government, IRAN, Palestine Fatah, ARAB LEAGUE, LIBYA House of Representatives, YEMEN Houthis, KURDS of Syria

## Partners

TURKEY, PALESTINE Fatah, ISRAEL, IRAQ State of Law Coalition, JORDAN, QATAR, UAE, SAUDI ARABIA, EGYPT Government, BAHRAIN, JAPAN, HOLY SEE, EGYPT Government, PALESTINE Hamas

## Rivals

UNITED STATES, EUROPEAN UNION, CHINA, HUMANITARIAN ACTORS, UNITED KINGDOM, GERMANY, INDIA

## Adversaries

N/A

## Active Armed Opponents

ISIS, SYRIA Jabhat Fatah a-Sham, SYRIA Other Opposition Groups

## Proxy

SYRIA Government, IRAQ State of Law Coalition, KURDS of Syria

## External Sponsor

N/A

## Aid Recipient

PALESTINE Fatah, JORDAN, LEBANON, SOUTH SUDAN, SUDAN

## Aid Donor

N/A